

## **HEARING VOICES – STRATEGIES FOR EMPOWERING STAKEHOLDERS IN RELIGIOUS TOURISM**

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The secret to involving people in the development of religious tourism is to ensure that the processes are inclusive. Partnerships require the broadest recognition of legitimate stakeholders and the inclusion of this diversity within the developments.

One of the essential parts of inclusion is that everyone participation can have their voices heard as every one else learns to listen. Empowerment does not only rely on giving stakeholders a space to talk. It also requires other stakeholders to create the space in which those contributions can be valued.

There are formal mechanisms which can be adopted to open these spaces but they need to track all the way through to not only where decisions are made but to where the agendas about what the decisions are made that shape the discussions. Formal mechanisms will also go so far and we need to look at building on informal contacts as well. Discussions around what is important also shape what is thought to be possible. Actively listening to a diverse range of voices will open up the developments to new possibilities.